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ABSTRACT

An empirical summary of 33 studies considers the relationship between racial group orientation and self-concept of an individual. This issue represents a fundamental assumption of afrocentric education practices, that the racial group orientation of the individual is related to the self-esteem of the individual. The results demonstrate a positive relationship between the degree to which a person has a positive orientation towards his or her own racial group and the person's level of self-esteem. Communication scholars increasingly need to consider the issues of interethnic communication--so much of communication scholarship deals with the issues of how a person relates to another as an individual. The development of additional insights and more refined analysis in this investigation will improve the understanding of how persons identify themselves as members of some particular cultural group. (Contains 39 references and 2 tables of data). (Author/CR)

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RACIAL GROUP ORIENTATION AND SELF-CONCEPT: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP USING META-ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

RACIAL GROUP ORIENTATION

AND

SELF-CONCEPT:

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This empirical summary of 33 studies considers the relationship between racial group orientation and self concept of an individual. This issue represents a fundamental assumption of afrocentric education practices, that the racial group orientation of the individual is related to the self-esteem of the individual. The results demonstrate a positive relationship (r = .131) between the degree to which a person has a positive orientation towards their own racial group and the person's level of self-esteem. The implications that such findings have for views of communication, personal relationships, and afrocentrism are discussed.

A critical argument to those arguing about the impact of culture and race on social perceptions, including communication outcomes, is the possible existence of a relationship between the racial group orientation and self-concept. If a positive relationship exists, then a necessary connection between how a person identifies themselves as a member of a particular racial group and that individual's self image exists. This relationship provides a basis for all social interaction and communication episodes. The person views themself as a particular person with a particular image of their own ethnicity as they interact with others. To develop an understanding of interethnic communication requires inclusion of both racial group orientation and self-image of the person. The field of communication would obviously accept that a person's self concept plays an important part of the communication behavior. The argument about racial identification is to what degree does the identification of a person as a member of a racial group relates to that self image.

The consideration of communication practices, particularly those involving interethic communication must consider the issues of racial group orientation. The Martin, Hecht, and Larkey (1994) study points to the issues surrounding differences in assumptions or orientations when considering communication. The critical variable demonstrating consistent difference between European and African Americans was the issue of other orientation (see table 3, page 247 in Martin, Hecht, & Larkey, 1994). The scale for this concept only explore the focus of orientation but do not delve into a development of that orientation.

The impact of face needs, of the desire to maintain a sense of personal worth, esteem, and value constitutes a driving force in communication. The degree to which a communication involves these issues may provide some different dynamics for members of different

races. The consideration of power, racial orientation, and self-image provides a basis for such judgments.

CONSIDERING THE ISSUE OF RACIAL GROUP ORIENTATION

Cross, wrote a bock, Shades of Black (1991) that deals with the issues of diversity, black identity, and other issues in black psychology. The issues he considers is how the degree to which blacks feel about their own racial group will or will not influence the self esteem of the individual. The critical feature is the recognition of diversity within the black community, that there does not exist a monolith called "black" thought. Cross (1991) concludes by stating, "I along with other nigrescence theorists and researchers, have tried to offer a way of looking at, and talking about, the development of various black identities-nationalist, bicultural, and multicultural-including Afrocentricity. We have sought to clarify and expand the discourse on Blackness by paying attention to the variability and diversity in Blackness" (p. 223).

Part of a person's self concept should be derived from how comfortable they find their own racial/ethnic identity. A person draws from the family and the culture a sense of values or worth. The complexity is that a person may define their race or ethnicity in a variety of manners. There does not exist a sense of single unifying edifice that defines the experience of any racial or ethnic group. Within that diversity that constitutes a particular group lies the ability of the person to find a path that represents the basis of an identity as a member of a particular group.

The problem that Cross (1991) deals with is the notion of black self-hatred and the need to deal with issues of black identity. The landmark case of Brown v. The Board of Education relied partly on the existence of social science evidence demonstrating that black children were adversely impacted by segregation. The studies demonstrated that

the continued segregation would hurt the chances of ethnic children to benefit from the education they received. The basis for this conclusion lies in the infamous "doll choice" experiments. The experiments demonstrated that black children in segregated schools demonstrated a preference for white as opposed to black dolls.

The demonstration of this preference was arguably an illustration of the negative impacts of segregation. The black children saw their race as a negative part of themselves, the preference for the white dolls was arguably the demonstration of a form of self-hatred (reinforced by the existence of segregated schools). The fact that they were black, and did not prefer that identity creates the potential for a sense of self-hatred based on the racial identity of the person. The social scientists argue that a person not oriented positively towards their own racial group will develop a negative self-image. The self-image of the person should be negative since one of the defining characteristics of the person (that person's race) is considered negative.

Given the assumption of a relationship, the issue is how large the relationship. Cross (1991) argues that the relationship, while it may exist, is not large. Cross argues that the relationship is not particularly important and therefore should not play and important part in the thinking of scholars. Cross reviews a large number of studies, using a narrative vote counting method, to reach his conclusion.

Afrocentric scholars argue, as one primary assumption that there exists a large relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem. An argument in favor of afrocentric education is the positive impact such material has on the self-esteem of the student. The argument is consistent with the segregation argument in Brown. Scholars argue that until students can accept their racial heritage positively, the ability of the system to improve the minds of the students will accomplish

little. The argument stems from the "hidden" contribution of Africans (and African Americans) to the culture, history, literature, and science of the society. The contributions exist, but the dominant ethnic group (European Americans) fails to recognize and credit the contribution of black americans. The result is a lack of inclusion into cirriculums, a denigration, by omission, of the black identity. The result is a diminished sense of accomplishment and a anomie, as the child cannot find anything positive in their racial group.

The communication outcomes are equally obvious. Self-image consistently plays an important part in communication theories. From arguments about the credibility of the communicator, to the competence of the message sender. All of these elements involve the notion of how a person views themselves positively or negatively.

The relationship involving self-esteem and racial group orientation implies an impact of cultural perspective on the communication process. The assumption that Americans with diverse ethnic backgrounds share a common perspective within which to communicate plays a dangerous part in generalizing research. For example, the Dindia and Allen (1992) meta-analysis comparing the self-disclosure of males and females excluded studies dealing exclusively with nonwhite samples. The findings therefore may not generalize to nonwhite groups. The more than 200 studies did contain minority members, but the analyses were not based on examining a particular group, analyses only containing minority groups were not included. This lack of inclusion may indicate that the impact of minority groups is "diluted" when part of a larger data set. If differences exist based on ethnicity, then one factor that must be entered in is the degree to which a person views themselves as part of a particular racial group. Only when considering both the classification of race as a biological

and psychological categorization can the impact of ethnicity on the communication or other processes become assessed.

USING META-ANALYSIS TO SUMMARIZE DATA

Meta-analysis constitutes the process of summarizing quantitative investigations of the available literature. Meta-analysis takes existing research and combines the effect of the individual studies to estimate an average effect. The technique permits the simultaneous consideration of large amounts of data. This consideration makes this form of review superior to the traditional narrative form of review (Allen & Preiss, 1993, Preiss & Allen, 1994).

Cross (1991) uses the classic narrative vote-counting summary approach in handling the current studies. However, his technique relies on examining the relationship of each study based on the results of the significance test for that study. Unfortunately, such a procedure exacerbates the problems associated with both Type I and Type II error. Type I error, or false positives, occurs at a 5% rate (the level of alpha). Type II error rate is a combination of three factors: (a) inverse the level of Type I error rate, (b) the size of the effect, and (c) the size of the sample. Type II error is the making of a false negative, concluding that no effect exists, when in fact an effect does exist. The example would be a study concluding no significant relationship exists, when in fact a relationship does exist. The ability to detect the existence of an effect is called the "power" of the test. Experiments typically have power at less the 50%. That is, the probability of an effect attaining a level of significance is less than 50%.

By combining sample sizes, meta-analysis changes the third of these factors by increasing the sample size. The resulting average correlation has the power of the combined samples, rather than the power of single samples. With sample sizes of individual investigations often

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at about 100, combining 20 or more experiments increases the sample size from 100 to over 2,000. The resulting increase in power from such a procedure is enormous.

The problem with reliance on the narrative review to draw conclusions is that typically the power of social science investigations is 50%. That is, the rate of false negatives, nonsignificant findings when an effect exists, is roughly 50%. By combining sample sizes from various investigations, the rate of Type II error diminishes rapidly. Meta-analyses usually provide sample sizes in the thousands, whereas individual experiments often only use sample sizes in the hundreds.

Meta-analysis also provides the ability to examine the potential impact of moderator variables as well. A relationship may exist but be moderated by methodological or substantive features of interest. For example, while the majority of data sets in this area use black individuals, some studies include white or Hispanic samples. The ability to determine whether the relationship is consistent across other racial groups is important. In addition, there exist a variety of measures for racial group orientation and self-esteem. The correlation between the two variables might change based on the particular measure used.

The advantages of meta-analysis is that ability to generate the findings on a systematic basis. The procedure also permits the data to be integrated at a quantitative level.

METHODS

Literature Search

The book by William Cross, Shades of Black (1991) provides a comprehensive list of sources of empirical literature on the topic. This search was supplemented with a computer search of ERIC and Psychlit using the combination of terms "racial identification" and "self-esteem". All sources identified as a result of these methods were

obtained. In addition, all the obtained manuscripts had the reference section examined for additional citations and sources of information.

To be included in this meta-analysis, a manuscript had to meet the following conditions:

(a) The study had to have a measure of racial group orientation and self-esteem,

(b) The study had to permit the estimation of a statistical correlation between the two measures of interest.

For a variety of reasons, some investigations were not included in this report.

Statistical Analysis

This review uses the correlation coefficient as the metric of comparison between study results. All the results of the various investigations were transformed from the original statistics into the correlation coefficients. The formulas for such transformations are well established and used frequently (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990). The information from the studies is taken and then converted to a common metric for comparison.

Individual correlations were corrected for various statistical artifacts changed the estimation of the effect. Some of the correlations were effected by attenuated measurement, dichotomization of independent or dependent variables. The appropriate correction formulas were applied to correct for these artifacts.

The individual correlations from each study are then averaged using a formula that considers the sample size of the original study. The average is a sample weighted average. The contribution of any individual study is weighted by the corresponding sample size for that investigation. The assumption stems from the notion the studies with larger sample sizes are better estimates of the population parameter because the larger sample size reduces the amount of sampling error.

The next step is the consideration of one assumption of the technique, that is that the average correlation comes from a normally distributed sample of effects. The issue is whether the combining of effects is comparing 'apples' to 'oranges'. It should be noted that if this comparison is true, then the comparisons that Cross (1991) makes suffer from the same failure. The difference between meta-analysis and narrative reviews is not the use of comparisons, but rather the method of comparisons. Since Cross, in his comparison, felt that the differences between measures and techniques do not prevent direct comparison, the assumption that a direct comparison is possible is accepted by at least one reviewer.

A "true" moderator variable is a variable that creates a dynamic where there is homogeneity within a level of the variable (if categoric) and heterogeneity between levels of the variable. Basically, this argument is that within the level of a categoric moderator there should exist homogeneity of effects but that the mean level of that category should be significantly different from all other levels of the moderator variable.

RESULTS

Overall

There existed a positive correlation between racial group orientation and self-esteem ($\underline{r}$ = .131, $\underline{k}$=33, $\underline{N}$=6469). The results demonstrate an association between the two variables. The test for moderating influences was positive($X^2_{(32)}$= 72.22, $p < .05$). This result indicates the probable existence of a moderator variable. The results across the 33 studies demonstrate the existence of a low level, but consistent relationship between the variables. Almost all the studies have positive correlations existing between racial group orientation and self-esteem measures.

CONCLUSIONS

The results demonstrate a consistent positive relationship between racial group orientation and self-concept. The results indicate that as a person begins to identify themselves as a member of the racial group to which they belong their self concept improves. The impact of this on communication research and the need to consider the issues of race and culture are of course important. While the verbiage and representation in the above sentences may appear causal, it should not be interpreted as such. The summary only provides for the existence of a relationship. The relationship, while it exists, does not provide direct evidence of causation.

The importance of the relationship may appear small, typically most scholars would not consider the existence of a .131 correlation of substantive importance. However, consider the impact on distributions when using the bell or normal curve there might appear to be more significant implications. The consideration of the findings using the BESD (Binomial Effect Size Display) technique (Rosenthal, 1984) provides some important perspective. If we were to divide at the mean persons with high and low racial group orientation and then compare the self-esteem values of each group we would find the following (a summary of this information appears in Table 2). Persons with a high racial group orientation are 20% more likely to have above average self esteem than persons with low racial group orientation. This is not necessarily an unimportant or insubstantial effect. Most notably, at the three standard deviation, a person with high self-esteem is 2 1/2 times more likely to have a high level of racial group orientation.

The results reaffirm the conclusions that Cross (1991) offers on the issue of the relationship between self-esteem and racial group orientation. Cross argues that there probably exists no large correlation between self-esteem and racial group orientation. That

conclusion is confirmed in this investigation. That is not to say that the finding is unimportant.

While the correlation is small, it should not be viewed as unimportant. While it average person would demonstrate little impact of the correlation between the variables, at extreme levels, the correlation takes on very important implications. The full scale development of those issues awaits more investigation.

Communication scholars increasingly need to consider the issues of interethnic communication. So much of communication scholarship deals with the issues of how a person relates to another as an individual. The use of individual differences (communication apprehension, cognitive complexity, communicative competence) is commonplace within the field. The consideration of how a person feels toward their own race should form, to a large degree, the basis of communication practices.

This view treats race and culture to a large extent as interchangeable or at least highly interrelated. This may be very problematic under a variety of conditions relating particularly to the assimilation of nonindigenous individuals. Whether there exists a black "culture" or "cultures" may mean that the manifestation of racial orientation takes a variety of forms for any individual to consider as a means of deciding how to implement a sense of racial orientation. These results only indicate that persons finding such an expression have higher levels of self-esteem then those that do not.

The afrocentered educational approaches often consider and argue that the need for alternative forms of education is based on developing positive self-concepts for the student. This research serves to confirm that premise indirectly be demonstrating that there does exist a relationship between self-esteem and racial group orientation. The question of whether African centered education positively impacts on this relationship is not answered and requires an additional meta-

analysis. However, this finding at least supports one underlying premise of the method.

The development of additional insights and more refined analysis in this investigation and others will improve the understanding of how persons identify themselves as members of some particular cultural group contributes to the communication patterns among and between groups. This finding only serves to confirm the importance of such issues as they contribute to our understanding of human interaction.

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Table 1

Correlations Obtained from Existing Studies.

Author	Date	Correlation	N
Bennett	1976	.350	84
Bowler	1986	.040	607
Butts	1963	.163	50
Clark	1979	.020	210
Cummings	1975	.130	241
Dulan	1975	.036	1000
Enty	1979	.229	415
Grossman	1981	.113	439
Hall	1980	-.010	30
Hendrix	1977	.193	240
Hernandez	1984	.090	63
Jacques	1976	.181	196
Jarrett	1980	.091	96
King	1981	.070	117
Maish	1977	.120	170
McWhorter	1983	.141	157
Meyers	1966	.284	46
Mobley	1973	.284	145
Parham	1985	.230	166
Paul	1980	.480	59
Rasheed	1981	.052	63
Robinson	1977	.048	124
Schmults	1975	.417	44
Smith	1974	.380	52
Smith	1991	.170	170
Spencer	1976	.029	130
Spencer	1973	.164	480
Stephen	1979	.052	346
Storm	1970	.020	36
Vaughn	1977	.319	70
Verkuyten	1990	.367	237
Ward	1972	-.027	126

Table 2

Examining the Implications of the Findings

	Percentage of those persons past the cutoff	
	Racial Group Orientation	
	Persons above average	Persons below Average
Above Average Self-Esteem	60%	50%
Above One Standard Deviation	23%	16%
Above Two Standard Deviations	4.1%	2.3%
Above Three Standard Deviations	.31%	.13%